

AMERICA'S
PUBLIC
TELEVISION
STATIONS

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Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

October 3, 1996

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

Mr. William F. Caton
Acting Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20554

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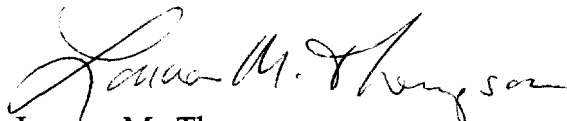
Re: CC Docket No. 96-45 Ex Parte Notice

Dear Mr. Caton:

The Association of America's Public Television Stations, Inc. ("APTS"), hereby notifies the Commission of written communications to a Federal State Joint Board member on universal service. Attached are two letters, one to the Honorable Laska Schoenfelder, Commissioner, South Dakota Public Utilities Commission and to one staff member Charles Bolle, South Dakota Public Utilities Commission, sent by APTS' member station, South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 887-7030.

Respectfully submitted,



Lonna M. Thompson
Director, Legal Affairs

cc: Honorable Reed E. Hundt, Chairman
Honorable Rachelle B. Chong, Commissioner
Honorable Susan Ness, Commissioner
Honorable James H. Quello, Commissioner

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**South Dakota
Public
Broadcasting**

Telecommunications Center
Cherry & Dakota Streets
P.O. Box 5000
Vermillion, South Dakota 57069-5000
(605) 677-5861

September 6, 1996

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OCT - 3 1996

The Honorable Laska Schoenfelder, Commissioner
South Dakota Public Utilities Commission
State Capital, 500 E. Capital Ave.
Pierre, SD 57501-5070

**Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary**

Dear Honorable Schoenfelder:

Thanks for taking time to speak with me about universal access for educational telecommunications services, and the universal service proceeding before the FCC. The Federal/State Joint Board has a monumental task before it, and public television is ready, willing and able to help you complete it.

Universal access is at the core of public television's mission. Our commitment to universal access is evident in the many services public television stations and networks provide to schools, libraries, and health care facilities around the country. I have attached a copy of the recent joint comments filed in this proceeding by the Association of America's Public Television Stations and the Public Broadcasting Service which highlight the immense reach and benefit of educational services now provided by public television.

In 1965-66 the South Dakota Legislature laid the foundation for the creation of a statewide public broadcasting network when it created an educational telecommunications planning and advisory board. They also provided \$400,000 to fund equipment purchases. Since then, this network has grown into an infrastructure of nine radio and nine television transmitters reaching over 90% of the state's geographic area and population base. The capital investment for the network's infrastructure to cover the state is close to \$20 million.

Each year the network broadcasts dozens of educational programs. During the school year, South Dakota Public Television offers Instructional Television programs in a 90-minute time block Monday through Thursday throughout the school year. Additional ITV programs are broadcast on the network's Overnight Service weeknights and may be taped for classroom use.

These programs offer classroom teachers the opportunity to supplement their curriculum with programs on history, government, culture and a variety of other subjects. More than 140,000 students across the state, from pre-school through high school benefit from our ITV service each week.

SD Public Television provides learning opportunities for adult viewers too. Since 1979, the network, in cooperation with the University of South Dakota, has offered telecourses each semester that enable viewers to receive academic credit. More than 900 South Dakotans enroll in these telecourses each year. This combination of technology and education provide viewers statewide with an opportunity to obtain college credit. The network has also provided a lengthy series of programs designed for people seeking a high school diploma through GED. To enhance its educational programming, the network provides school teachers and daycare providers with workbooks and other materials related to particular programs. The network also serves as a resource center for materials related to issues and topics raised by some programs.

One example of this service is the Sesame Street Preschool Educational Program (SSPEP) newsletter. More than 900 daycare providers across the state receive this newsletter each month. The newsletter provides ideas for activities related to information presented on **SESAME STREET**. The goal of SSPEP is to help prepare two-to-five year olds for school, and keep them excited about learning. Approximately 7,600 children across the state participate in the program each year.

There are many other examples that I could list showing how SDPB has played an active role in educational telecommunications in the state. However, the point of my letter is that it is essential in providing discounted rates to schools and libraries for telecommunications facilities, the Commission include broadband video and interactive capacity. This would permit public television to expand and enhance existing services to educational entities.

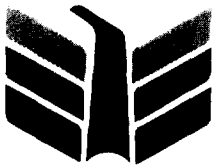
I hope that when you consider the most effective means to achieve universal access, you will keep in mind the public television services that guarantee thousands of people in the most remote parts of America access to educational facilities. Public television stations share the common goal of achieving true universal access to telecommunications services for educational use.

I would appreciate the opportunity to update the Joint Board on the educational services provided by South Dakota Public Broadcasting and other public television stations around our country. If I can provide you with more information, please don't hesitate to contact me at 605-677-5861.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Checots", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Don Checots
Executive Director



**South Dakota
Public
Broadcasting**

Telecommunications Center
Cherry & Dakota Streets
P.O. Box 5000
Vermillion, South Dakota 57069-5000
(605) 677-5861

September 6, 1996

Charles Bolle
South Dakota Public Utilities Commission
State Capital, 500 E. Capital Ave.
Pierre, SD 57501-5070

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Sincerely,



Don Checots
Executive Director